



Dial toll free

1-800-392-1111

Sponsored by the Conservation Federation of
Missouri, Missouri Department of Conservation,
and Mark Twain National Forest

Operation Forest Arson

Forest fires are a problem everywhere, but here in Missouri they are serious. The Missouri Department of Conservation reports that careless trash burners accidentally start 50 percent of the fires, arsonists deliberately set 40 percent, and another 10 percent start from miscellaneous causes. Wildfires damage 40,000 to 90,000 acres of our forest each year. Your local Volunteer Fire Departments, U.S. Forest Service and Conservation Department personnel battle an average of 7,000 wildfires each year. The cost of wildfire detection and suppression by these agencies is a considerable burden on all taxpayers.

Prescribed fire can be a useful forest management tool when properly used by professional land managers. Prescribed fire is only for specific sites and conditions and should not be confused with wildfires



set by arsonists. Setting wildfires, at least for some individuals, is a game they play to harass landowners and conservation authorities. A neighborhood feud sometimes results in a fire. A few people out for a good time and a little excitement often set fires "just for the fun of it."

Arsonists are the same individuals who vandalize road signs, shoot livestock and wildlife from the road, and burglarize rural homes. Citizen cooperation with all law enforcement agencies is essential. Arsonists have to know that Missourians will not tolerate their activities. In some areas, arsonists set fire to the forest at any time of the day or night without fear of prosecution. Until they can't trust anyone to remain silent, arsonist's activities will continue.

There is now a way for concerned citizens to remain anonymous while they help put an end to the arsonist's selfish game. **Operation Forest Arson** provides a reliable method for citizens to call, report an arson violation, and collect a reward without anyone knowing who reported the crime.

Rewards range from \$200 to \$1,000 for the arrest and conviction of an arsonist. A minimum reward of \$100 will be paid for information helpful in apprehending or identifying a violator. A maximum of



\$1,000 can be paid for information about major violations and known repeat offenders. The Forestry Committee of the Conservation Federation of Missouri initiated **Operation Forest Arson**. It is a cooperative effort with the Department of Conservation, U.S. Forest Service and Conservation Federation of Missouri to stop the senseless burning of our forest resources. Private donations fund **Operation Forest Arson**.

Putting hard-core arsonists out of business is the intent of **Operation Forest Arson**. The offenders will wonder who might be watching, and who might turn them in to the authorities. **Operation Forest Arson** can help expose and apprehend arsonists by providing a statewide toll-free hotline, reward incentives, and instructions on recognizing and reporting arsonists. Operation Forest Arson allows the informant to remain **anonymous**. The Conservation Federation Forestry Committee, who pays the



reward, will not even know who the informant is. Thus, there is no chance that an arsonist might retaliate.

If you see or learn of someone deliberately setting a fire, simply telephone the number listed below or contact the Conservation Agent in your county and give him or her the necessary information. You will be given a code number and agree upon arrangements to receive a non-traceable bank draft after an arrest and conviction. If you are unable to reach your local agent or a regional office, please dial toll-free:

1-800-392-1111

Please report even if arsonists have finished their dirty work or if you find evidence of recent arson activity.

- Be on guard for signs that may mean you're dealing with arsonists. Fires at night and fires of suspicious origin are two of the most obvious signs of arson.
- Provide all the information you can about the suspect; the vehicles, license or registration numbers, and the area in which the fire took place.
- Investigations will be completed under the same guidelines as any law enforcement investigation.

The reward money comes from donations made by private citizens, interested groups, and corporations. A nine-member citizen advisory board administers the reward money. Contributions can be made to: **Operation Forest Arson** Reward Fund, c/o Conservation Federation of Missouri, 728 W. Main, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

We can all help put arsonists out of business. **Operation Forest Arson** can work. You can make it work.

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